

The Communications Division

801.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the basic functions of the Communications Division. It addresses the immediate information sharing needs of the departments it supports in the course of its normal daily activities and during emergencies.

801.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Merced Police Department to provide 24-hour telephone service to the public for information and for routine or emergency assistance. The Department provides two-way radio and electronic communication capabilities to allow for continuous communication between the Communications Center and department members in the field.

801.3 THE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER SECURITY

The communications function is vital and central to all emergency service operations. The safety and security of the Communications Center, its members and its equipment must be a high priority. Special security procedures should be established in a separate operations manual for the Communications Center.

Access to the Communications Center shall be limited to Communications Center members, the Shift Supervisor, command staff and department members with a specific business-related purpose and with approval by a sergeant or above.

801.4 EMERGENCY MEDICAL CALLS

The most efficient method to handle incoming calls for medical aid is facilitated by establishing a set of procedures to follow when the calls are received. This order will establish those procedures.

It is the policy of the Merced Police Communications Center to respond the appropriate medical aid to all medical emergencies.

801.4.1 PROCEDURE EMERGENCY MEDICAL CALLS

The Public Safety Dispatcher answering a call for medical aid shall determine if the party is reporting a true time emergency. Based on the information provided, the dispatcher shall create a call for service and transfer the caller to Riggs Ambulance Dispatch Center if a true time emergency exists. If a true time emergency does not exist, the dispatcher will transfer the caller directly to Riggs Ambulance service.

- (a) The following information shall be noted as quickly as possible in the event that a call for service needs to be started: :
 - 1. Address of the medical emergency
 - 2. Cross street
 - 3. Telephone number of the caller

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4. Nature of the medical emergency

- (b) Once the caller is transferred to Riggs Ambulance, the dispatcher shall notify Riggs Ambulance Dispatch Center if City Fire will be responding or not.
- (c) If it is determined that a true time emergency exists, or if Riggs Ambulance calls back to advise that they have a priority one medical emergency, then the following information shall be provided to the responding units:
 - 1. Location of the medical emergency
 - 2. Nature of the medical emergency
 - 3. Units responding and recap of location and nature of emergency

d. "True Time" Emergencies are medical emergencies that present an immediate threat to life and limb generally keyed to a four to six minute life-death time frame. True time emergencies include the following conditions:

- (a) Cardio-respiratory arrest
- (b) Obstructed airways
- (c) Unconsciousness or Altered Level of Consciousness (ALOC)
- (d) Major trauma/hypovolemia (major blood loss)
- (e) True O.B. emergencies
- (f) Drowning
- (g) Electrocutation
- (h) All burn cases involving the head, neck, chest or burns exceeding 10 percent of the body.

Lack of Ambulance Availability: Public safety dispatchers shall immediately respond City Fire to all medical emergencies when notified by Riggs Ambulance Dispatch that they have no ambulance immediately available or it is out of position for a timely response.

Industrial Accidents: Public safety dispatchers shall respond City Fire to all industrial accidents involving:

- (a) Explosions
- (b) Building or trench collapse (cave-ins)
- (c) All other accidents where extrication or rescue is required.

Non-life Threatening Responses: City Fire shall be dispatched to all non-life threatening medical aid calls whenever they are specifically requested for assistance.

Canceling Emergency Responses: Whenever City Fire responds to a medical emergency, that response will be cancelled or its response mode reduced whenever updated information is received by the public safety dispatcher from units already at the scene of the medical emergency. This notification shall be made directly to the responding units.

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801.5 RESPONSIBILITIES

801.5.1 COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION SUPERVISOR

The Chief of Police shall appoint and delegate certain responsibilities to a Communications Supervisor. The Communications Supervisor is directly responsible to the Division Lieutenant or the authorized designee.

The responsibilities of the Communications Supervisor include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Overseeing and ensuring the efficient and effective operation of the Communications Center in coordination with Lead Dispatchers and other supervisors.
- (b) Overseeing the scheduling and maintenance of dispatcher time records.
- (c) Scheduling and maintenance of Lead Dispatcher time records.
- (d) Work with Lead Dispatchers to develop and manage dispatch shift schedules
- (e) Supervising and/or providing training to Dispatchers and Lead Dispatchers
- (f) Supervising evaluation of dispatchers.
- (g) Supervising and evaluating Lead Dispatchers.
- (h) Provide supervision, direction, and support to Dispatchers and Lead Dispatchers.
- (i) Ensuring the radio, telephone, and recording systems are operational.
 - 1. Recordings shall be maintained in accordance with the established records retention schedule and as required by law.
- (j) Processing or supervising the processing of requests for copies of Communications Center information for release.
- (k) Maintaining Communications Center and Records Management database systems.
- (l) Maintaining and updating Communications Center procedures manual.
 - (a) Procedures for specific types of crime reports may be necessary. For example, specific questions and instructions may be necessary when talking with a victim of a sexual assault to ensure that his/her health and safety needs are met, as well as steps that he/she may take to preserve evidence.
 - (b) Ensuring Dispatcher and Lead Dispatcher compliance with established policies and procedures.
- (m) Handling internal and external inquiries regarding services provided and accepting personnel complaints in accordance with the Personnel Complaints Policy.
- (n) Maintaining a current contact list of City personnel to be notified in the event of a utility service emergency.

801.5.2 LEAD DISPATCHER

Lead Dispatchers report to the Communications Supervisor or Patrol Supervisor. The responsibilities of the Lead Dispatcher include, but are not limited to:

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- (a) Working with the Communications Supervisor and other department supervisors to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the Communications Center.
- (b) Assist with developing and managing dispatcher shift schedules.
- (c) Scheduling and maintaining dispatcher time records.
- (d) Provide or assist with providing training and evaluation of dispatchers.
- (e) Prepare dispatch recordings for courts as needed.
- (f) Provide supervision, direction, and support to dispatchers as assigned.
- (g) Receiving and handling all incoming and transmitted communications, including:
 - 1. Emergency 9-1-1 lines.
 - 2. Business telephone lines.
 - 3. Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)/Text Telephone (TTY) equipment.
 - 4. Radio communications with department members in the field and support resources (e.g., fire department, emergency medical services (EMS), allied agency law enforcement units).
 - 5. Other electronic sources of information (e.g., text messages, digital photographs, video).
- (h) Documenting the field activities of department members and support resources (e.g., fire department, EMS, allied agency law enforcement units).
- (i) Inquiry and entry of information through the Communications Center, department and other law enforcement database systems (CLETS, DMV, NCIC).
- (j) Monitoring department video surveillance systems.
- (k) Maintaining the current status of members in the field, their locations and the nature of calls for service.
- (l) Notifying the Shift Supervisor or field supervisor of emergency activity, including, but not limited to:
 - (a) Vehicle pursuits.
 - (b) Foot pursuits.
 - (c) Assignment of emergency response

801.5.3 DISPATCHER

Dispatchers report to the Lead Dispatchers. The responsibilities of the dispatcher include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Receiving and handling all incoming and transmitted communications, including:
 - 1. Emergency 9-1-1 lines.
 - 2. Business telephone lines.

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3. Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)/Text Telephone (TTY) equipment.
 4. Radio communications with department members in the field and support resources (e.g., fire department, emergency medical services (EMS), allied agency law enforcement units).
 5. Other electronic sources of information (e.g., text messages, digital photographs, video).
- (b) Documenting the field activities of department members and support resources (e.g., fire department, EMS, allied agency law enforcement units).
 - (c) Inquiry and entry of information through the Communications Center, department and other law enforcement database systems (CLETS, DMV, NCIC).
 - (d) Monitoring department video surveillance systems.
 - (e) Maintaining the current status of members in the field, their locations and the nature of calls for service.
 - (f) Notifying the Shift Supervisor or field supervisor of emergency activity, including, but not limited to:
 - (a) Vehicle pursuits.
 - (b) Foot pursuits.
 - (c) Assignment of emergency response.

801.5.4 ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES

The Communications Center should establish procedures for:

- (a) Recording all telephone and radio communications and playback issues.
- (b) Storage and retention of recordings.
- (c) Security of audio recordings (e.g., passwords, limited access, authorized reviewers, preservation of recordings past normal retention standards).
- (d) Availability of current information for dispatchers (e.g., Shift Supervisor contact, rosters, member tracking methods, member contact, maps, emergency providers, tactical dispatch plans).
- (e) Assignment of field members and safety check intervals.
- (f) Procurement of external services (e.g., fire suppression, ambulances, aircraft, tow trucks, taxis).
- (g) Protection of essential equipment (e.g., surge protectors, gaseous fire suppression systems, uninterruptible power systems, generators).
- (h) Protection of radio transmission lines, antennas and power sources for the Communications Center (e.g., security cameras, fences).
- (i) Handling misdirected, silent and hang-up calls.
- (j) Handling private security alarms, if applicable.

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- (k) Radio interoperability issues.

801.6 CALL HANDLING

This Department provides members of the public with access to the 9-1-1 system for a single emergency telephone number.

When a call for services is received, the dispatcher will reasonably and quickly attempt to determine whether the call is an emergency or non-emergency, and shall quickly ascertain the call type, location and priority by asking four key questions:

- Where?
- What?
- When?
- Who?

If the dispatcher determines that the caller has a hearing and/or speech impairment or disability, he/she shall immediately initiate a connection with the individual via available TDD/TTY equipment or Telephone Relay Service (TRS), as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

If the dispatcher determines that the caller is a limited English proficiency (LEP) individual, the dispatcher should quickly determine whether sufficient information can be obtained to initiate an appropriate response. If language assistance is still needed, the language is known and a language-appropriate authorized interpreter is available in the Communications Center, the dispatcher should immediately connect the LEP caller to the authorized interpreter.

If no authorized interpreter is available or the dispatcher is unable to identify the caller's language, the dispatcher will contact the contracted telephonic interpretation service and establish a three-party call connecting the dispatcher, the LEP individual and the interpreter.

Dispatchers will be courteous, patient and respectful when dealing with the public.

801.6.1 EMERGENCY CALLS

A call is considered an emergency when there is an immediate or potential threat to life or serious property damage, and the timely arrival of public safety assistance is of the utmost importance. A person reporting an emergency should not be placed on hold until the dispatcher has obtained all necessary information to ensure the safety of the responding department members and affected individuals.

Emergency calls should be dispatched immediately. The Patrol Division Shift Supervisor shall be notified of pending emergency calls for service when department members are unavailable for dispatch.

801.6.2 NON-EMERGENCY CALLS

A call is considered a non-emergency call when there is no immediate or potential threat to life or property. A person reporting a non-emergency may be placed on hold, if necessary, to allow the dispatcher to handle a higher priority or emergency call.

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The reporting person should be advised if there will be a delay in the dispatcher returning to the telephone line or when there will be a delay in the response for service.

801.7 RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

The police communications radio system is for official use only, to be used by dispatchers to communicate with emergency units and department members in the field. All transmissions shall be professional and made in a calm, businesslike manner, using proper language and correct procedures. Such transmissions shall include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Members acknowledging the dispatcher with their radio identification call signs and current location.
- (b) Dispatchers acknowledging and responding promptly to all radio transmissions.
- (c) Members keeping the dispatcher advised of their status and location.
- (d) Member and dispatcher acknowledgements shall be concise and without further comment unless additional information is needed.

The Communications Supervisor shall be notified of radio procedure violations or other causes for complaint. All complaints and violations will be investigated and reported to the complainant's supervisor and processed through the chain of command.

801.7.1 FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION COMPLIANCE

Merced Police Department radio operations shall be conducted in accordance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) procedures and requirements.

801.7.2 RADIO IDENTIFICATION

Radio call signs are assigned to department members based on factors such as duty assignment, uniformed patrol assignment and/or member identification number. Dispatchers shall identify themselves on the radio with the appropriate station name or number, and identify the department member by his/her call sign. Members should use their call signs when initiating communication with the dispatcher. The use of the call sign allows for a brief pause so that the dispatcher can acknowledge the appropriate department member. Members initiating communication with other law enforcement or support agencies shall use their entire radio call sign, which includes the department station name or number.

801.8 DOCUMENTATION

It shall be the responsibility of the Communications Center to document all relevant information on calls for service or self-initiated activity. Dispatchers shall attempt to elicit, document and relay as much information as possible to enhance the safety of the member and assist in anticipating conditions that may be encountered at the scene. Desirable information would include, at a minimum:

- Incident control number.
- Date and time of request.

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- Name and address of the reporting person, if possible.
- Type of incident reported.
- Involvement of weapons, drugs and/or alcohol.
- Location of incident reported.
- Identification of members assigned as primary and backup.
- Time of dispatch.
- Time of the responding member's arrival.
- Time of member's return to service.
- Disposition or status of reported incident.

801.9 CONFIDENTIALITY

Information that becomes available through the Communications Center may be confidential or sensitive in nature. All members of the Communications Center shall treat information that becomes known to them as confidential and release that information in accordance with the Protected Information Policy.

Automated data, such as Department of Motor Vehicle records, warrants, criminal history information, records of internal police files or medical information, shall only be made available to authorized law enforcement personnel. Prior to transmitting confidential information via the radio, which could have an impact on the safety of field personnel, an admonishment shall be made that confidential information is about to be broadcast.

801.10 TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Dispatchers shall receive training consistent with minimum standards established by POST (Penal Code § 13510).